



SOCIAL MARKETING: APPLICATION OF MARKETING CONCEPT FOR IMPROVING HEALTH BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

Social marketing is the application of marketing concept, theory and approach to sell social ideas for good cause. It has great potential in the field of health promotion in a country like India where most of the problems arise due to wrong or inappropriate behaviors. Social marketing starts with identification of need followed by segmentation of audience on the basis of risk and developing message accordingly. Hence instead of delivering the same message from top to bottom, need base messages are delivered to persuade the audience for improved health behavior. The present paper examines how the social marketing can be used in health sectors.

KEY WORDS: Social Marketing, Commercial Marketing, Health, Product, Audience.

Introduction:

The health communication field is witnessing drastic changes since last few decades. Traditional approach uses public service advertising, mass campaigns, and communicating same information from top to bottom without understanding the need of the people, which does not bring desired change in health behavior. It also fails because, either the audience is not aware about the potential risk of any particular behavior, practice or they do not give it much attention due to lack of time, motivation or engagement in some other important task. Cave & Curtis 1999¹ in their study found that messages fail to bring change toward positive behaviors because "health consequences of negative behaviors are not immediate or are hard to see, or because they are not seen to be relevant or potent enough. Indeed, a wealth of studies indicates that enhancing knowledge and creating supportive environments are not in themselves enough to produce any sizeable impact upon behavior". For a successful health promotion campaign it is essential to identify the need of the target audience and tailor made the message which fit in their concept, easy to adopt and personal benefits should be visible in short term. These days, applying the principal of marketing for promoting good ideas for social cause and thus in health also is gaining momentum these days which is called social marketing. Based on commercial market approach, social marketer identify and listen to the needs and desire of the target audience, and tailor making the program accordingly as all individuals are neither same nor their requirements are similar. Thus in social marketing also like in commercial marketing consumer is the king and all the strategies, programs and messages are designed by taking into account the consumers or target audience's need.

What is social marketing?

The roots of social marketing can be traced to 1952 when Weibe asked, 'why cannot you sell brotherhood as you sell soap'? Weibe examined four social campaigns to determine the condition responsible for their success or failure and he concluded that more the condition of campaign resembles the conditions of product campaign, more it would be successful. (Weibe, 1952)² Social Marketing was born as a distinct discipline by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman in 1970.³ They define social marketing as 'Social marketing is the design, implementation and control of programs seeking to increase the acceptability of a social idea or practice in a target group.'

In 1975 Kotler⁴ expanded his definition as "social marketing utilizes market segmentation, consumer research, concept development, communications, facilitations, incentives and the exchange theory to maximize target group response". Anderson emphasizes more on intension rather than method. He defines social marketing with more as "Application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society". (Anderson, 1995)⁵ However Lazer and Kelly⁶ define it as "Social Marketing is concerned with the application of marketing knowledge, concepts and techniques to enhance social as well as economic ends. It is also concerned with the analysis of the social consequences of marketing policies, decisions and activities".

Thus Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and approach to influence human behavior or benefit society which requires in depth research and constant reevaluation of every aspect of the program. In fact, research and evaluation together make the social marketing process more efficient and result oriented.

Use of Social marketing for Public Health:

Social marketing has been widely used in solving public health problems. It has fast become "part of the health domain" (Link, Franklin, Lindsteadt, & Gearon

1992)⁷ and will "play a bigger role in public health. It can be used to promote family planning, breastfeeding, good nutrition, childhood immunization and oral rehydration". (Coreil, Bryant & Henderson, 2001).⁸ It offers health professionals an "an effective approach for developing programs for healthy behaviors". (Coreil et al, 2001)

Social marketing is a systematic and sequential process which is audience centered seeking SMART (Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Reasonable, and Timeframe) behavior goals. It is driven by the audience needs; wants and deep insight about will help to overcome the problem.

Social Marketing versus commercial marketing: Social marketing concept has been borrowed from marketing and therefore both are similar in many aspects.

Consumer orientation: After production and sales orientation, the modern marketing believes its consumer as the king. Marketing expert, Drucker states "Business (must) start out with the needs, the realities, the values of the customer. It (consumerism) demands that business define its goal as the satisfaction of customer needs. It demands that business base its rewards on the contribution to the customers." (Peter Drucker, 1973).¹⁰ This is applicable in social marketing also. The social marketers must know their audience and their behavior thoroughly, and they must also know what may appeal to their target audience or motivate them to adopt certain behavior. "Health marketing refers to health promotion programs that are developed to satisfy consumer needs. Strategized to reach as broad an audience as is in need of program, and thus enhance the organization's ability to effect population-wide changes in targeted risk behaviors". (Lefebvre & Flora, 1988).¹¹ It emphasized on the identification of consumer's need, rather than selling the same product-delivering the same message to all or developing message claiming that they are fully aware about the consumer. Lefebvre et al also emphasize, "As opposed to being "product-driven" (or "expert-driven"-e.g. we know what they need"), the marketing philosophy underscores the necessity for health agencies to be aware of responsive to consumers needs".

Marketing Research: Marketing research is essential in marketing whether commercial or social marketing. It can be divided as formative, pre-test, monitoring and evaluation. While formative research helps to 'form strategies, especially to select and understand target audience, and develop draft marketing strategies' (Kotler & Lee 2008).¹² Market research or analysis of situation is also undertaken by social marketers to understand the customers' health / social problems, their behavior responsible for the head problem, present beliefs, attitude and knowledge about a relevant social/ health issue.

Market Segmentation: There is segmentation of Consumers / audience in both cases. "Segmenting target markets helps us to group those with commonalities as well as gain a better understanding their specific wants, needs, barriers and behaviors" (Kotler, Roberto & Lee 2002).¹³ "There are many variables by which target markets can be segmented; and these are geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral" (e.g., Kotler, Adam, Brown and Armstrong, 2003).¹⁴ Social marketing offers a consumer centered approach and demands a thorough, well researched understanding of the target market, specifically their knowledge, attitudes and behaviors relevant to the behavior change at hand (Maibach, Rothschild & Novelli 2002).¹⁵ According to Grier & Bryant (2005)¹⁶, "social marketers are more likely to divide the population into distinct segments on the basis of current behavior (e.g. heavy vs. light smoking), readiness to change, product loyalty, and or psychographics (lifestyle, values, personality characteristics)"

Marketing Mix: The marketing mix, also known as the "4 P" given by McCarthy (1964)⁵, "is made up of four parts that, together, create the exchange offered to the target audience. These four Ps of marketing mix are product, price, promotion and placement or distribution.

Product: In social marketing product is the awareness, knowledge or behavior a marketer want to adopt from his target audience and in this way it is not necessarily a tangible object. It may be products e.g. (use of medicine) services (pathological examination or clinical test) practices (e.g. breast feeding, washing hand before eating, eating green vegetables or fruits) and finally more intangible ideas like (abstaining from alcohol or tobacco). The important point is that the offering of products will be acceptable only when the audience understand about the problem they have. For e.g. If person is not aware that erratic life style will lead to cardiac problem, they will not accept the idea of leading a systematic life, doing exercise and eating green vegetables and fruits.

Price: price means cost of obtaining the social marketing product. This may be in term of money like purchasing medicines, in terms of time e.g. exercising or taking off from the office for clinical test or in term of effort for e.g. quitting smoking. For the success of social marketing, the benefits achieved should outweigh cost then only an individual will accept the prescribed behavior or in marketing term accept the offered products. Exchange theory of marketing postulates that if social marketers can "demonstrate that the perceived benefits... outweigh the perceived costs of its purchase, voluntary adoption by the consumer is most likely". (Maibach, 1993).¹⁸

Promotion: Promotion is the third P of marketing mix and is concerned with convincing or persuading people for the health behavior. The promotion in case of social marketing may be in any form like advertising, public relation, personal selling. It can also involve teaching life skills or community activities. The tool selected should work for the target audience and to which the audience should have access, therefore the traditional media, nukkad play or demonstration may also play miracle, depending upon the audience.

Placement: It refers the way, the product reaches the customers. For a tangible product, this means the distribution system like warehouse, sales force, transport, retail outlets where it is sold. For intangible object it is where the audience will perform the desired behavior.

The purpose of placement is to ensure the accessibility and availability of products as if it is difficult to obtain or perform, the audience will not opt the prescribed behavior. For e.g. if the audience are convinced for immunization of their child, and the facility is not available nearby, they will not be able to avail the service for their child.

In addition to traditional marketing Mix 4 Ps components, four more Ps are added specific to social marketing. These are publics, partnership, policy and purse strings.

Publics: In case of social marketing, public are both external as well as internal who affect the success of the campaign. They may be target audience whom the program addresses, group that influence the target audience, policy makers, media, community leaders and also the internal public who are linked with social marketing campaign implementation like board members, staff and other who help in implementation.

Partnership: Public health issues are mostly complex and therefore it requires partnership which may be with Non Governmental organization, governments, Local community or even individuals. (Weinreich, 2006).¹⁹

Policy: For successful social marketing it is essential the recommended behavior opted by target audience must sustain. It is possible only, when environment support it which requires sometime change in policy or framing new policy and media advocacy.

Purse String: It means funding of the social marketing project.

Differences in Social and Commercial Marketing: There are certain differences in the two types of marketing.

- Commercial marketing focuses on the needs of individuals as identified by the individual where as social marketing focuses on the needs of individual identified by the social marketer.¹²
- Social marketing also differs with commercial marketing with respect to objectives of the marketers as social marketers seeks to influence social behavior not to benefits the marketers but to the benefits the target audience and the general society (Wilson and Olds, 1991).²⁰
- Commercial marketing, segmentation is done on the basis of most profitable segment, but in social marketing the segmentation is done on the basis of risk, or the stage of change. Because the people who are more at risk require different approach than who are at less risk. Similarly people who are not vaccinating their child at all require different messages rather than who are get-

ting vaccination but incomplete.

- The return on investment is financial in case of commercial but in case of social marketing, return is in terms of degree of change in health behavior brought about.

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